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AUTHOR Bousquet, Robert J.
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ABSTRACT

Many black students speak a nonprestige dialect called black English, which places them at a disadvantage academically and socially. This monograph describes the features of black English, defines its use, discusses several theories of its origin, and offers some methods for teaching black students standard spoken usage as another style of speech. Stressing that the features of black English are not universal throughout the United States, the monograph presents a general description of it according to the pronunciation of consonants and grammatical features that include loss of endings, verb forms, negatives, construction of indefinite articles, and several miscellaneous features. The theories discussed hold that black English developed as a result of one of the following influences: the colonial British dialect of the overseer; pidgin, a simplified language developed to carry out business affairs; or from creole, a complicated, transmitted version of pidgin. The monograph concludes with several drills for teaching standard English. (HAI)

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Analysis Report

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TRENTON
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Jean Franklin Emmons, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Robert J. Bousquet

Research Specialist

Robert L. Jackson, II, Ph.D.
Director

Department of RESEARCH,
EVALUATION & DEVELOPMENT

Trenton Public Schools
108 N. Clinton Avenue
Trenton, New Jersey 08609

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PREFACE

Schools are social systems and can be studied in terms of their sociological structure, their dynamics, their patterns, contents and achievements. However, it must be remembered and understood that schools are an ecosystem of human responses and interactions. Each of the participants behaves according to their expectations of their own rights and obligations. These participants seek a balance between gratification and unfulfilled needs. The greater the awareness and sensitivity the participants have of themselves and others, the greater the opportunity for harmony, growth and development.

Unfortunately, it is a characteristic of our society in general and our human service organizations in particular to treat differences as abnormalities and deficiencies. The resultant distorted perception becomes a negative valence to harmony, growth and development.

This Analysis Report, the fourth in a series, by the department of Research, Evaluation and Development, is offered in the hope that better understanding of differences can contribute to planning pedagogical strategies to foster success for our students, and for us an institution mandated to provide a thorough and efficient education.

Robert L. Jackson, II Ph.D.

Director

Black English: Facts and Misconceptions

For the school year 1976-77, the ethnic breakdown of the Trenton Public Schools was as follows:

70% Black

18% White

12% Hispanic

Many of the black students, as well as some of the whites and Hispanics, speak a form of English known as Black English or Afro-American English. Because it is a non-prestige dialect (form of speech) its speakers are put at a disadvantage both academically and socially for using it. It is the purpose of this monograph to describe its features, define its use, look at its possible origin (s) and offer some possible methods for teaching these students another "style" of speech which is to their benefit to know and use.

Before describing it, let us see what it is not. Some misguided souls, unfortunately two of the most famous being the noted educational psychologists Carl Bereiter and Siegfried Englemann, have confused difference with deficit. While it is indeed true that Black English differs in many respects from the speech of the majority of middle class white students, this does not mean that it is linguistically inferior or that its speakers are intellectually inferior. It is to be deeply regretted that some think otherwise. These psychologists have erroneously concluded that the language of black children is almost without a grammar. Further they state that inner city residents can not compose or speak in complete sentences, but rather in giant words. They have limited vocabulary because in many instances they are unable to name even a "common" object. In addition they are severely limited in abstract and/or logical thought.

In this same vein, Stanley Dickson's Communication Disorders deals in part with environmentally deprived speech (Black English) as a pathologically induced mental retardation" (P. 97). The next logical step is, of course, to blame the difference in speech patterns on innate intellectual inferiority. Some even go so far as to state that Blacks perform poorer than Whites on I. Q. tests without realizing that most mass-given I. Q. tests are to a large extent testing standard English usage.

Naturally these same people have causes for this type of speech, among them are the following: not much regard for verbal ability in lower class homes, mother too busy to talk to kids, poor verbal models, and too much noise which ruins auditory discrimination ability.

These false charges have been answered by sociolinguists such as William Labov in his classical essay "The Logic of Nonstandard English." He argues convincingly that Black English has:

1. Verbality-under favorable conditions, black children love to talk; there is no relation between verbality in the school and in the street. Indeed word play is highly prized in the black community.
2. Verbosity-while whites tend to use complex sentences and gobbledygook to hide their lack of understanding, blacks get right to the point.
3. Grammaticality-it does not follow that because Black English has a different grammatical system than that of standard English, it lacks structure.

4. Logic-what we many times think to be logic is nothing more than standard usage. For example, in mathematics it may be true that 2 negatives make a positive; this, however, does not hold for language. Old English, present-day Russian, Spanish, French, and Hungarian permit "double" negation.

To believe that someone is incapable of abstract thought simply because he at present does not have at his disposal the technical or jargon terminology used in various "abstract" subjects is patently absurd.

Not only are I. Q. test culturally biased, but so are such hearing tests as the Wepman Auditory Discrimination Test since they are based on the distinctions of standard English not Black English. For example, the blacks "inability" to hear a difference between pin and pen, which will be treated later, is not auditory but sociolinguistic. In fact it is no different from the average New Yorker's inability to hear a difference between the Southerner's pronunciation of hoarse and horse or a New Englander's inability to discriminate between cot and caught.

To reiterate, while it is true that Black English is linguistically a legitimate form of speech, it can be a block to social, academic, and economic mobility. Therefore, it may be desirable to find out what features are likely to be harmful to its speakers and to change these. In so doing, the teacher must not destroy or even downgrade the native speech forms of his or her students. Rather it must be stressed that there are other forms which must be used in certain social situations, such as presenting a talk in school or going for a job interview. This use of two different dialects in different social situations is known as bidialectalism. Some believe that such a process is subversive to black culture and, therefore, consider it unethical. It is the belief of this writer and others that while this may not be the ideal "American way," it may

serve the needs of the students better than ignoring the reality or trying to change the opinions of the majority culture. Indeed this use of 2 dialects is similar in many respects to what the educated person does every day in style-shifting; we do not talk the way we write. We talk differently: in choice of pronunciation vocabulary items and complexity of grammatical structure when we are scolding our own 5 year old at home or conversing with a potential employer. All that we are really doing is opening up the options available to the student; he now can sound like a member of the majority culture when, and only when, he choses. To do less for our students would be a disservice.

Language, Dialect, Idiolect

Let us begin by defining some basic terms. The word language comes from the Latin word Lingua,meaning tongue. This gives us a good idea of its present meaning. Language is perhaps best defined as an arbitrary system of articulated sounds made use of by a group of humans as a means of carrying on the affairs of their society. A closer look at some of these concepts will aid our understanding. Arbitrary simply means there is no real or necessary connection between sounds and meaning. The four-legged animal that barks and wags its tail when you return home is only called a dog in English because of a societal convention. Although this may sound like a very simple concept, speakers of one language sometimes forget that their language is not inherently better or more natural than any other of the 4,000 to 7,000 languages spoken today. This is especially true of speakers of American English who believe that they can make themselves understood anywhere in the world if they speak English loudly enough and slowly enough. Language is also systematic; that means that the sounds must be put together in certain ways for meaning to be conveyed. For example, -s indicates plurality in cats, but is ungrammatical if put somewhere else in the word *scat,* cast,etc. Word order is important in English.

The dog bit the man is different from The man bit the dog; this is not necessarily true in other languages which are highly inflected, like Latin. Similarly, a house cat is not the same as a cat house; not all languages have this sort of compounding.

We can also see by the above definition that language is made up of articulated sounds. Writing is not language; in English writing attempts to reproduce in some form the spoken word; however, at times for various reason, it does not succeed very well. IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT LANGUAGE IS PRIMARILY AND ESSENTIALLY ORAL. It is in this area that any remedial work must begin, but more of this shortly.

The last part of the definition reminds us that language is used by humans to carry on the affairs of their society. All languages are equally capable of doing this for their speakers, thus linguistically no language is better than any other. Although there have been various theories proposed to explain the origin of language, the most reasonable is that it arose simply because man needed an effective and efficient means of communication so that cooperation would be possible for important tasks, such as hunting and defending the community.

The next crucial term to be discussed is dialect, which is a form of language determined by the regional background and/or social class of the speaker. Most of us think we can recognize a New Englander by his "broad a's", a Southerner by his "drawl, " and a New Yorker by his pronunciation of earl for oil. Actually these are quite inaccurate descriptions of the various regional dialects of the United States. Although it is not the purpose of this monograph to discuss these forms of speech in any detail, one should be aware of the major dialect areas of the United States. Figure 1 shows the major dialect areas of this country and the social and hence linguistic migrations.

Figure 1

The North is represented by numbers 1-6; the Midland by numbers 7-13, and the South by 14-18. It is important to notice that the geographic coastal South (14-18) is different from the geographic inland South (9,12,13) in migration patterns and hence linguistically. Black English, which we will deal with in much detail shortly, is a coastal, rural Southern dialect brought to Northern urban areas. This explains to a large degree why it stands out so.

The early settlement history of this country and the isolation of the various Colonies are responsible for the predominance of the dialect areas on the eastern seaboard. The dialects became less pronounced as one goes westward.

Unlike some countries, such as Great Britian, France, Italy, and Spain,to name a few, the United State does not have one recognized prestige dialect. The various dialect areas have their own regional standards of preferred forms, these being the ones used in each locality by the upper middle-class speakers native to that region. Forms restricted to lower class speakers are usually not regarded highly by the majority. While this may be chauvinistic and even morally and aesthetically wrong, it is a fact and one which must be dealt with in some manner. Americans also tend to like the "dialectaless" English spoken by Network newcasters. As a matter of fact, such speakers are rated as being intelligent, friendly, educated, trustworthy, God-fearing, talented, honest, and considerate by others simply because their speech is so acceptable t[illegible]he majority of Americans (see Tucker and Lambert). Again this may seem foolish, but it is a fact that a person is judged by others to a great extent on the basis of his speech patterns. To paraphase Shakespeare, truth is in the ear of the beholder.

Various false theories of dialect have been rejected by modern linguists. Among these were the belief that climate affects speech; thus Southerners were supposed to talk slower than Northerners because of the warm weather there. Some believed that anatomical differences were responsible for what they considered to be unusual pronunciations. One famous theory held that blacks don't pronounce r's because their lips were too thick; this is rather interesting since this sound is produced not by the lips, but rather by the tongue. Others also believed that an inferior intelligence was responsible for dialect differences. (Interestingly enough a person with an I. Q. as low as 50 has a fully formed language which differs in minor ways from the "normal" person. (See Lenneberg.)

Idiolect is the language of the individual. Each of us is slightly different in make-up and experience from everybody else; hence, each of us has his own unique language which differs in some way (s) from all others. These differences are very minor and are of little importance to the classroom teacher.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF BLACK ENGLISH

While the speech of many inner-city blacks is quite similar throughout the United States, it is certainly not uniform. Not everyone uses all of the following features on every occasion. As a rule the frequencies of these items are affected by age, sex, education, and social situation. Generally the young use these features more often than adults; the highest rate of incidence is found in adolescence. Males tend to use them more frequently than females. There is an inverse relationship between the education of the speaker and the frequency of their occurrence, the more education, the less frequent. The more formal the situation, the less frequently they are found; they also tend to be found less frequently in writing than in speech. Some may even disappear entirely in the written form.

A very important phenomenon to be understood by the teacher is categorical perception, that is any "incorrect" or non-prestigious speech form used approximately 30% of the time (or more often) will be heard as being used all of the time. Pedagogically this means the mastery level for any remedial work in language must of necessity be very high. Also interference between the student's native or first dialect will make learning a second and similar dialect of English quite difficult; in fact, some linguists are of the opinion that learning a second dialect is at least as difficult as learning a second language.

Finally it is important to remember that CORRECTNESS IN GRAMMAR AND INFLECTIONAL ENDINGS IS MORE HIGHLY VALUED THAN PRONUNICATION. While Americans allow regional pronunciations to remain, they look very critically at any breaking of the "correct" grammatical rules. For example, it is socially unimportant that some Easterners do not pronunce the r in card or door; however, this latitude does not extend to leaving out the r in your or the s in dogs. Of course, in written form, the language must be almost perfect in its following of the grammatical rules and in its lack of spellings which indicate regional pronunciation. About the only leeway here is in choice of some, not all, vocabulary items. For example, while few are bothered whether one writes faucet or spigot, one had better avoid cliches, slang and taboo words in formal written prose. Here again the teacher is reminded that by insisting that his or her students do these things, he or she is merely opening up the options to the student, not destroying his usual form of speech.

In order to make this description understandable to the non-linguist, some of the less common features and some of the complex terminology and reasoning have been left out. In addition for simplicity, the relative frequency of each feature is not dealt with. For example, a certain pronunciation feature may be

more common than another, but this will not be noted here.

Pronunciation: Consonants

The rule describing consonant cluster simplification sounds very abstruse, but a few examples will clear matters up. Generally if a word ends in 2 consonants, both of which are voiced (vocal cords moving during their production) or voiceless (vocal cords not moving or vibrating during their production) and the second is a stop consonant (b-p, d-t, g-k), the second is deleted. Thus we have the following:

test-tes, wasp-was, desk-des, left-lef, mind-min cold-col, apt- ap, act- ac.

Such clusters as mp,(lamp) are not reduced because m is voiced and p is voiceless, nor are ps in lapse because s is not a stop.

It is important to remember that such consonant cluster reductions are quite common in informal varieties of standard English when the next word begins with a consonant as in tes' paper or col' cuts. However, in Black English these can be simplified if the next word begins with a vowel as in wes' end and ol' apple. This pronunciation is socially stigmatized and should be corrected. Some speakers even delete these clusters when a suffix beginning with a vowel follows as in tesser for tester; this is highly stigmatized.

th sounds

There are actually 2 th sounds in English. One is voiced as the first sound in then;the other voiceless as the first sound in thin. They are made exactly the same way, except for the vibration on non vibration of the vocal cords. They have parallel alterations in Black English.

At the beginning of words, the voiced th becomes d, a voiced stop, as when then becomes den; the voiceless th becomes t, a voiceless stop as when thin becomes tin.

At the end of words, the voiced th voiced th becomes v (another voiced sound), as when with is pronounced wiv; the voiceless th becomes f, a voiceless sound, as when tooth pronounced toof. The same phenomenon happens when these sounds appear in a word with a vowel on each side: brother, -trova and author-ahfuh. If this voiceless th is followed by r, the th becomes f as when three becomes free. All of these pronunication features are highly stigmatized.

R and L Sounds

These sounds act in distinctive yet similar ways in Black English. While they are pronounced at the beginning of a word, both become a schwa or are not pronounced at the end of a word following a vowel, as in nickel becoming nickuh and sister becoming sistuh. Likewise both are lost when they precede a consonant at the end of a word, as in help becoming hep and court becoming caught. The social prestige of these pronounciations varies according to the region involved. Generally the r-less pronunication is acceptable throughout the eastern seaboard, while the l-less pronunication is found in parts of the South. Therefore, these features are not as highly stigmatized as those described previously.

These pronunications will cause much trouble, however, when they "cross" grammatical boundaries. For example, if the r at the end of your were dropped, such a non-prestige construction as you house would be produced. In the same manner, some linguists explain the construction I be here as the loss of l before a consonant. These kinds of constructions are highly stigmatized.

Nasals

A very common feature of Black English, as well as informal varieties of standard English, is the substitution of n for the glottal nasal ŋ, usually represented by the letters -ng, as in walkin for walking. Remember that this only occurs in the instressed -ing suffix, but not in other constructions. For example,

sing would not be changed to sin. Before n, the contrast between pin and pen, tin and ten is lost or neutralized. Pin would be heard for the first group and tin for the second.

Both of these features have little social significance, with the second being more noticeable to some. While it would be beneficial to point out these differences, correcting them should not be at the head of the priority list.

Miscellaneous:

The consonants in ask are often turned around, producing what sounds like axe (aks). Although this is a very old phenomenon in this word, it is now regarded as substandard and therefore should be corrected.

Some sounds which are normally diphthongs become a simple vowel in Black English, as when side resembles sod and boy is pronounced baw. These pronunciations seem Southern, which indeed they are, and although they are considered strange are not condemned.

It is also quite common form some speakers to drop unaccented initial syllables, such that remember becomes 'member and about becomes 'bout. In extreme cases, the person does not realize that there is supposed to be an initial syllable, and does not even use it in writing. At this point, remediation must step in. These pronunciations, of course, are common in colloquial English.

Such pronunciations as pólice for políce or or Détroit for Detróit are common but not highly stigmatized.

GRAMMATICAL FEATURES

The first and major concern of the teacher must be with the inflectional endings (plurals, possessives, past tense markers) and grammatical constructions (multiple negation, pronominal apposition, word order, etc.) rather than with pronunication differences. It is in these areas where conformity to the rules of standard English is mandated by the society for acceptance into the majority

culture. There are, of course, exceptions to this, but they are few. It is important to point out that mastery of these rules will not necessarily mean the student will be warmly accepted into that society. It does mean, however, that one of the nominally predominant reasons for excluding him has been destroyed.

Loss of Endings

Let us begin by looking at 3 quite different inflectional endings, different in the sense that they have 3 distinct meanings, which have almost identical formation rules and are often confused by students. These are the plural and possessive in nouns and the third person, singular present tense markers. All three of these are usually written as -s, with an apostrophe as a mark of the possessive.

The cruicial point is their formation in spoken English. Generally they are all formed according to the following rules:

1. if the word ends in a voiceless sound, an -s sound is added to the word. As in one rack (k is voiceless) two racks; Kirk's space craft; he walks.
2. if the word ends in a voiced sound, a -z is added to the word, as in one fan, two fans (a z sound); a man's house; he runs.
3. if the word ends in a sibilant sound (such as -s, -z, sh, -ch, -j,), a vowel resembling a schwa plus a -z are added, as in two judges, the judge's chambers, and he judges.

Although the apostrophe distinguishes the possessive in these written examples, they are identical (in form) in spoken English. They are not identical in occurrence; the plural in nouns is found more frequently than the possessive which in turn is more frequent than the third singular present tense marker.

More specifically the experts have found that such deletion of the plural sign, as in 2 dog, occurs only about 10% of the time. Some speakers unsure of the correct construction use such hypercorrect forms as foots and mens. The first

of these is nothing more than the application of the "usual" rule to an irregular form in standard English; the second is a double plural. If you will think back to the treatment of consonant cluster reduction earlier, you will remember that the usual pronunication of such a word as desk is des; the speaker believing that this is the base form of the word attempts to form its plural by using rule 3 above, thereby saying deses. This is quite common in some varieties of Black English.

When the possessive marker is omitted, possession is indicated by word order, as in the boy car. The correct possessive tends to be used more frequently when it appears last in the sentence; thus the speaker who said the above would probably say The car is the boy's. Such hypercorrect forms as Jack's Johnson's car or Jack's Johnson car are also found.

As mentioned above, the third person singular present tense marker is very frequently lost in the speech of many blacks. As a matter of fact, the verbs say and do which require a vowel change in addition to the proper ending in the third singular, lack even this vowel change. (Notice that the vowel of I say is different from the vowel in he says, as is I do and he does.) Because of the confusion between their own rule for forming this and the standard rule heard in the speech of others, such hypercorrect forms as I walks, you walks, we walks, they walks can occasionally be heard.

Another ending which is frequently lost is the past tense marker, usually written as -ed. This can be confusing for there are three distinct sounds actually represented by the one written form. Here are the rules for past tense formation of regular verbs in standard English:

1. if the word ends in a voiceless sound, other than t, a t sound is added, walk - ed, pronounced as walkt.

2. if the word ends in a voiced sound, other than d, a d sound is added as in rob - robbed, pronounced robd.
3. if the word ends in t or d, an id is added, as in add, added, act, acted.

Many speakers following the consonant cluster rule described earlier, delete the past tense marker especially in the words described in rules 1 and 2 thus saying "He walk yesterday." The past tense is marked in irregular verbs in Black English, such as sing-sang, and even keep-kep'.

Verb Forms

Let us continue our treatment by looking at other characteristics of the Black English verbal system. Speakers of both standard and non-standard English use the verbal auxiliaries, or helping verbs, am, is, are, was, and were. Standard English also has contracted forms of is and are, as in He's walking, they're going. Some speakers of Black English take this tendency to contract one step further by deleting these auxiliaries altogether, producing he walkin; they goin. Note that when standard English does not permit these forms to be contracted, as in John is talking and she is too, Black English speakers do not delete them.

The future tense auxiliary (wi)'ll can also be lost in Black English as explained in the pronunciation section under loss of l. Thus I'll be here would be produced as I be here.

This use of be as a sign of the future should not be confused with an apparently identical use in the sentence I be busy. This construction implies some sort of habitual action as opposed to an event which only took place once. Although these may be difficult for the listener to differentiate out of context, their respective negative forms are distinct. The negative of the future tense sentence

I be here is I won't be here; whereas the negative of the present tense habitual action sentence I be busyis I don't be busy.

In the past tenses, Black English as two distinctive forms lacking in standard English, namely done as a sign of completed action and been as a sign of remote time. I done walk (ed) means that 'I have finished walking already'; I been walk (ed) means 'I walked a long time ago.' This last construction is never found in any variety of white English, and many believe it to be derived from an African source. It is rarely found in Northern cities.

Negatives

Just as in many varieties of non-standard English, ain't is used as a negative contraction of be and have, as in He ain't here and He ain't done nothing. A construction limited to Black English is its use for didn't, as in He ain't seen me. This can be misunderstood as meaning 'He hasn't seen me.'

Black English, like many other varieties of English, allows multiple negation in a sentence. Although it has been argued that many languages permit multiple negation and that the proscription against it is rather new to English, double and multiple negation is highly stigmatized, except in the rather formal construction. Talent is not uncommon in his family.

Questions

Black English has 3 distinctive constructions in this area. First, while standard English, direct questions beginning with a wh- question word, such as what, when, where, why, require the helping verb to come before the subject, Black English retains the usual statement form, as:

Where can you go? Standard English

Where you can go? Black English

On the other hand, indirect questions in standard English beginning with a question word do not require the helping verb to precede the subject; Black English

permits the auxiliary to come before the subject. Thus we have:

She asked what I was doing. Standard English

She asked what was I doing. Black English

Indirect questions requiring if or whether in standard English do not require these words in Black English:

I asked if (whether) I could go. Standard English

I asked could I go. Black English.

Notice in the last sentence, the auxiliary precedes its subject. Linguists believe that some speakers of Black English have great difficulty using whether constructions, and in some cases even fail to understand them.

Pronominal Apposition

This is nothing more than a pronoun used immediately after the noun to which it refers, as in My brother, he is on the team. This construction is found even in standard English with the only distinction being that many words separate pronoun from its antecedent, as in My brother who was an all-city star in high school, he is on the team. While this second form is not as highly stigmatized as the first, the pronoun is redundant and thus should be eliminated.

Indefinite Article

In standard English the rule for the definite article is as follows:

a - is used when the next word begins with a consonant sound

a book

an - is used when the next word begins with a vowel sound,

an apple, an L (the first sound pronounced in this letter is a vowel).

Some speakers of Black English use a in all instances, as in a book, but also a apple.

It as an Expletive

Where standard English uses there in such a sentence as There is a stalled car ahead. Black English uses It, as in It is a stalled car ahead.

It is important to point out again that not every speaker uses all of the above forms nor does he use the forms he has in his idiolect 100% of the time. Many white speakers in the inner city use some of these forms as well. Indeed Black English influences varieties of Spanish-Influenced English.

Let me close this section with some features found in many varieties of non-standard English.

Miscellaneous Features

Pronouns

Some young speakers, on all social levels at one time or another, have difficulty determining the correct case of the personal pronoun. Such sentences as Him and me are here or Jim want him book back are found in the speech of elementary grade students. In a few cases, the student even has trouble with gender distinctions, She a nice man.

Some have trouble with these possessive forms:

Singular	Plural
mine	ours
yours	yours
his, hers, its	theirs

All of the above, except for mine, end in -s. Some speakers attempt to regularize this system by adding the -s to it, producing mines; others regularize it by taking mine as the model and adding -n to the other forms, giving yourn, hisn,

Later when the convention of writing are being taught, its and it's and they're their, there may become hopelessly confused.

Many, not realizing that the first and second person reflexives are formed on the possessive pronoun (myself, yourself, ourselves) while the third person reflexives are formed on the objective case forms (himself, herself, itself, themselves), produce such forms as hisself, theirselves, or even theirself, where the singular ending is put on the plural.

In areas influenced by New York speech, speakers attempt to give you a distinctive plural form, namely youse; Y'all, by the way, while sounding amusing to some Northern speakers, is a permissible form in the South and needn't be critized here unless it appears in formal writing.

The incorrect use of them for the demonstrative pronoun those, as in I like them shoes, is quite common. Some speakers also add here to the demonstrative this, and there to the demonstrative that, giving the substandard constructions this here and that there.

It is also important to remember that this and that are singular and these and those are plural, so that such a construction as These kind will not be used.

It would probably be accurate to say that the majority of Americans do not feel comfortable when making the who-whom distinction. While it may be true that this difference is fading, it still exists especially in formal writing. The rule simply stated is that where he would be grammatically appropriate, use who; where him is correct use whom. Note in some sentences the gender distinction may be violated.

For example, Who (m) should I say is calling?

If you put this in the affirmative form, you have I should say he (him) is calling? Since he is the correct form here, use who.

Some non-standard speakers use which for who, as in My mom, which is standing over there. While who must be used to refer only to persons, which must refer only to non-persons.

Adjectives and Adverbs

Many speakers confuse adjectives and adverbs, thus producing such a form as: He drank his beer quick (for quickly). Good for well is very common also, as in She sang good.

Some speakers besides confusing the proper use of the comparative (faster, more beautiful)to two and the superlative (fastest, most beautiful)to three or more, use double comparative and superlative forms, as in: He is more quicker than you.

There are, of course, other incorrect forms and constructions, but this has attempted to deal with the most common.

Origin (s) of Black English

The question of exactly where Black English originated is currently causing a major controversy among linguists. For years they believed that it could be traced directly to Colonial British dialectal speech. According to this Dialectal Theory, the poor white overseers spoke varieties of 17th and 18th Century British English which were non-prestigious since they spoke essentially non-London Received Standard English. Since this was the only type of English the black slaves heard, it was only natural that this became the type they eventually learned.

Any deviation between the overseer's speech and that of his underlings was blamed on poor imitation. Indeed this seemed like a very adequate theory, for most believed children learned the language of their parents in somewhat the same manner. Historical evidence backed up this theory also, for linguists were able to find almost every feature of Black speech in some form of British dialectal speech.

Recently, however, other linguists have noticed a great similarity between some varieties of black speech and pidgins spoken throughout the world. Once West African languages were investigated and analyzed, experts were able to find

possible sources for many features of Black English in the African languages spoken in the original home of the slaves. From this arose the Creole Hypothesis.

More specifically this theory held that when European settlers, whether they were Portuguese, Dutch, or Englisn, first had contact with Africans, their languages were so different that it was necessary to "make up" a simplified language to carry out the minimal business affairs. Such a language is known as a pidgin, the word itself means "business" in Chinese Pidgin English. Such a language is different from natural languages in having very few inflections (word order being the important grammatical marker), few irregularities, a limited vocabulary, and a simplified phonology. Another distinguishing quality of a pidgin is that no one speaks it as his or her native language.

When these Blacks were brought to America as slaves, they brought their pidgin with them. White slave owners found it was to their advantage to mix the slaves on their plantations in the sense of picking them from many language backgrounds, for if the slaves couldn't communicate, they couldn't organize an escape or a revolt. The slaves realizing that it was of little use to speak their native tongues in this situation found that they could make themselves understood to their fellows and the overseers by speaking the pidgin. Eventually this became the native language of their children; once this happened, it became what is known as a creole. As this happened, the language itself became more complex. Such an African-English creole is still spoken today off the South Carolina, Georgia and northern Florida coast; it is called Gullah. It is believed that Black English originally was very similar to Gullah, but as time passed and the blacks moved away from this area. Black English became more like white English.

It is not possible to unequivocally prove either of these theories, and if the truth were known, it is probable that Black English has been influenced by

African speech, the tendency to simplify grammatical structure to make communication with someone of an alien language easier, and the speech of the poor white overseers. Possibly the Creole theory is gaining ground because of the present movement toward black awareness and pride.

Teaching Strategies

Psycholinguistic Insights:

By the age of five, most children have acquired a command of the phonology, morphology, and syntax of their native language. Vocabulary acquisition continues for the remainder of their lives. How do all children learn their first language? Is it by sheer imitation? Research has indicated that although imitation may be needed for articulatory development, it is not very important for the acquisition of syntax. The majority of sentences uttered by children are not mere imitations of adult sentences. Instead recent finding indicate that a child actually abstracts the structure from every utterance he hears, forms tentative rules, and produces sentences using these rules. By the time he is of school age, he has formed his own grammar of the language, something trained linguists spend many more years doing less satisfactorily. No one teaches the child these rules, indeed the adult users of the language are usually as unaware of them as the child learner. The implication of this for some is that in teaching a second dialect, it is useless to teach grammar. This assumption is not justified. First of all, there is not sufficient evidence to show that learning a second dialect is like learning a first language. There is also evidence which indicates that the ability to learn a language in this way reaches its peak by the age of six years and tends to disappear by adolescence. Second, it has been estimated that it takes approximately, 3,000 hours of use to acquire a first language. Certainly, we can help an

adult learner cut down this time by giving him various insights into the dialect he is attempting to acquire. It is more difficult to motivate a speaker to learn a second dialect than a second language because he thinks he already knows how to speak his language properly. Yet a speaker of a non-standard dialect must somehow be convinced that it would benefit him to become bi-dialectal. He must be trained until he can use Standard English without thinking.

Perhaps the best model to follow in teaching someone a second dialect is the following 5 step process:

1. the student must be made aware that there is a difference between his dialect and the one being taught; however, the teacher must be careful not to downgrade his native speech patterns.
2. the student must hear the standard English sound or pattern being taught.
3. after hearing it, he must be able to discriminate between the Standard English sound or pattern and the corresponding interfering sound or pattern in his dialect.
4. he must then be given drills which help him to reproduce the Standard English speech feature.
5. finally he must be given the opportunity to use standard English naturally and without consciously thinking of how he will say something.

Here are a few sample exercises which may be of benefit to the classroom teacher. They are not intended to be anything but a starting point to originate new approaches to teaching English as a second dialect.

Discrimination Drill

Tell whether the following words are the same or different:

1. tes, test

2. mask, mask

3. he make, he makes

Repetition Drill

Repeat after me:

dog, dog, dogs.

cat, cats, cats.

Style Drill

Tell where each of the following pronunciations or grammatical features would be appropriate, on the street or in the classroom.

1. three dog

2. many cats

3. The student is sitting at his des.

4. I don't have nothing.

5. I am writing with my new ball point pin.

Rhyming Drill

Give a word that rhymes with the following:

mask

mass

test

tess

sin

sing

pin

pen

Pronoun Drill

I own my car. The car is mine.

Substitute the correct form of you, he, she, it, we, they,

Pattern Practice (Negative Forms)

I will be here tomorrow. I won't be here tommorrow.

Make similar pairs of sentences using sing, walk, eat, etc.

Pattern Practice. (Helping Verb)

He sang yesterday. Did he sing yesterday?

Use other verbs in this exercise.

He sings today. Does he sing today?

He is singing today. Is he singing today?

Answer the following questions in a full sentence.

Does your mother cook well?

Did your brother join the Army?

Do you want to go to college?

Using Standard English in Free Speech

Give a two minute talk on the person you most admire and why.

Give a two minute talk on the person you most despise and why.

Writing in Standard English

Write a 100 word composition on

"If I had it to do all over again, I would..."

"My favorite subject is..."

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